

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 03326 090942Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
TRSE-00 HA-05 /070 W
-----002391 100903Z /13

R 090840Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8331
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USLO RIYADH
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3326

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, SY
SUBJECT: A SYRIAN VIEW OF REGRESSION FROM PEACE

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN POLITICIANS ARE CONVINCED SADAT'S INITIATIVE HAS LED THEM BACKWARDS AWAY FROM REAL PEACE AND CLOSER TO WAR. THEY CITE THE US TURN AWAY FROM THE PLO, STRENGTHENED PALESTINIAN REJECTIONIST ARGUMENTS AGAINST A POLITICAL COURSE, AND HEIGHTENED ISRAELI ILLUSION THAT PEACE WITH TERRITORY IS POSSIBLE AS EVIDENCE OF THIS REGRESSION. THEY AGREE WITH THEIR PRESIDENT THAT THESE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE MUST BE ERASED, AND CONCLUDE THEY WILL HAVE TO WALK AGAIN OVER A PREVIOUSLY BLAZED PATH IN ORDER TO GET BACK TO REAL NEGOTIATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN CONVERSATIONS POLOFF HAS HAD WITH SYRIAN POLITICANS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 03326 090942Z

AND OTHER INFORMED SYRIANS OVER PAST WEEK ISSUE OF SADAT AND HIS PEACE INITIATIVE HAS BEEN AT THE TOP OF THE AGENDA. MEMBERS OF WRITERS UNION, STUDENT UNION, PEOPLE'S COUNCIL, MFA, AND REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH UNION HAVE BEEN ON SAME WAVE-LENGTH WHEN IT COMES TO SADAT. THEY HAVE SPOKEN WITH FEELING AND CONVICTION, AND WITHOUT RESORTING TO CLICHES OF SYRIAN PRESS OR SYRIAN FONMIN (SEPTTEL). SOME HAVE

OBVIOUSLY THOUGHT CAREFULLY ABOUT IMPACT OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE AND ITS MEANING FOR SYRIA AND MIDDLE EAST PEACE AND THEY CONCLUDE THAT SADAT HAS SET BACK THE MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACE.

3. ALMOST TO A MAN, THESE PARTICULAR SYRIANS ADMITTED THE POSITIVE EFFECT SADAT'S INITIATIVE HAS HAD ON AMERICAN AND WESTERN EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION IN PROJECTING AN IMPROVED IMAGE OF THE ARAB WORLD AND IN SHOWING UP ISRAEL AS A RECALCITRANT STUMBLING BLOCK FOR PEACE IN THE AREA. THEY ARE ALSO PREPARED TO ACCEPT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THIS CHANGE IN WORLD PERCEPTION MAY HAVE LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES WHICH THEY CANNOT YET PERCEIVE.

4. NEVERTHELESS, THE HEART AND THE ROOT OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT IS THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION, THEY CLAIM. NEITHER SYRIA NOR THE UNITED STATES OR ANY OTHER MIDDLE EASTERN POWER CAN BRING PEACE TO THE AREA UNLESS AND UNTIL THE ARAB PALESTINIAN PEOPLE FIND POLITICAL SELF-EXPRESSION IN A HOMELAND. FURTHERMORE, THESE SYRIANS ADD, THE UNITED STATES AND EGYPT AND ISRAEL CAN BURY THEIR HEADS IN THE SANDS OF SINAI, BUT THEY CANNOT MAKE THE PLO GO AWAY ANYMORE THAN THE SYRIANS OR LEBANESE CAN DO, AND THEY CANNOT TURN THE CLOCK BACK TO THE DAYS BEFORE THE RABAT SUMMIT AND EXPECT TO FIND A SETTLEMENT BETWEEN JORDAN, ISRAEL, AND EGYPT. THE PLO IS A POLITICAL FACT OF LIFE WHICH MUST BE DEALT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 03326 090942Z

WITH.

5. WHEN LOOKING AT THE RESULTS OF SADAT'S MISSION, WE ARE TOLD NOE MUST FOCUS ON ITS IMPACT ON THE PALESTINIANS AND PARTICULARLY THE PLO SINCE THIS IS THE CORE PROBLEM. THESE SYRIANS CLAIM THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE IN WORLD OR US PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION. AMERICANS, IF ANYTHING, SEE THE PLO IN STARKER TERMS THAN THEY DID BEFORE SADAT'S INITIATIVE BECAUSE OF THE CONTRAST. THE US ADMINISTRATION, WHICH HAD BEEN SEEKING WAYS TO BRING THE PLO INTO THE PEACE PROCESS BEFORE SADAT WENT TO JERUSALEM, HAS NOW TURNED ITS BACK ON THIS ORGANIZATION. SEVERAL SYRIANS ADMITTED THE PLO HAD NOT MADE IT EASY FOR THE US TO GIVE THE ORGANIZATION A ROLE, BUT THEY CLAIMED THAT WE HAD NOT OFFERED THE PLO MUCH IN RETURN IN TERMS OF REAL HOPE THAT ISRAEL WOULD RECOGNIZE THEIR RIGHTS. NO ONE PRETENDS RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEMS IWILL BE EASY. REPEATEDLY, WHEN SYRIANS SPOKE OF THE GENEVA PROCESS THEY EQUATED IT TO THE VIETNAM PARIS PEACE TALKS FOR COMPLEXITY AND PROBABLE DURATION.

6. AS FOR THE PLO ITSELF, OUR INTERLOCUTORS CLAIM
SADAT'S ACTION. COUPLED WITH THE US REACTION HAS STRENGTHENED

THE ARGUMENT OF PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS IN THEIR SEESAW BATTLE WITH MODERATES OVER THE VALUE OF A POLITICAL COURSE. ARAFAT IS TRYING TO REESTABLISH A BALANCE, BUT HE CANNOT DO SO WITHOUT AMMUNITION DEMONSTRATING THAT THERE IS HOPE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

7. IT IS A FACT, WE ARE CHALLENGED BY THE SYRIANS TO REFUTE, THAT THE PEACE PROCESS HAS EDGED FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY FROM DEALING RESOLUTELY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE US HAS ABANDONED ITS EFFORTS TO ATTAIN A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES, AND THIS, SYRIANS CLAIM, HAS INDEED LED US FURTHER FROM REAL PEACE. IN ADDITION, THE IMPACT OF SADAT'S INITIATIVE ON ISRAEL CANNOT BE IGNORED. COMPARING ISRAEL BEFORE THE INITIATIVE TO TODAY THEY SEE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 DAMASC 03326 090942Z

ISRAEL'S STAND AS HAVING HARDENED. ISRAEL ACCEPTED, AT LEAST IN PRINCIPLE, A UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION TO GENEVA, BEFORE, WHILE NOW ISRAELIS ONLY SEE THE HOPE OF SPLITTING SADAT OFF FROM THE REST OF THE ARAB WORLD TO CONCLUDE A SEPARATE PEACE. ISRAEL WAS IN DOUBT IT COULD GET PEACE AND THE TERRITORY THEY WANT. SADAT CONVINCED THEM THEY CAN, IF THEY ONLY REMAIN STEADFAST.

8. AS FOR THE FUTURE, SYRIAN POLITICANS AGREE WITH THEIR COUNTRY'S POLICY; THE RESULTS AS OUTLINED ABOVE MUST BE ERASED. THEY FEAR IT MAY TAKE WAR TO DO SO. THEY BELIEVE, AT A MINIMUM, THEY WILL HAVE TO COVER GROUND ALREADY TROD BEFORE THE INITIATIVE TO GET BACK TO GENEVA OR SOME ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR HARD-HEADED NEGOTIATIONS WHICH HAVE EVEN THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE FOR SUCCESS.
PELLETREAU

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, PEACE PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DAMASC03326
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780243-0210
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780678/aaaacota.tel
Line Count: 152
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c1e7c58c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2422105
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: A SYRIAN VIEW OF REGRESSION FROM PEACE
TAGS: PEPR, PDEV, SY, XF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c1e7c58c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014